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AUTHOR Backstrom, Kurt; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Colby Community College's (CCC) Fitness Lab was established to provide the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program with a learning laboratory in which students can practice classroom-acquired skills, while at the same time promoting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual well-being of CCC students and staff, and community members. A variety of methods, materials, and technologies have been designed to achieve the Fitness Lab's goals, including personalized attention, continuous supervision of participants, demonstrations of proper warm-up exercising and equipment utilization, an orientation session, and written instruction manuals. Participants enroll in the Fitness Lab at the college, schedule a suitable time for pretesting and orientation, obtain medical clearance, participate in tri-weekly supervised workout sessions, and take a posttest. Keys to the success of the Fitness Lab have included: (1) top-level administrative support; (2) $30,000 in start-up monies from a vocational programming grant and the college's facility improvement budget; (3) staff members with backgrounds in nursing, physical fitness, or biological sciences who received special training in the use of the lab's equipment; (4) involvement of PTA students in participant testing; and (5) availability of the Fitness Lab to all students through a lifestyle course. Periodic meetings of those responsible for the Lab insure that the program is meeting its goals. (AJL)

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PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT FITNESS LAB

Colby Community College

Kurt Backstrom - Fitness Lab Diector, PTA Program Instructor

Suzanne Backstrom - PTA Program Instructor

Joyce Hansen - Chair, Health and Physical Education

October 1988

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PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT FITNESS LAB
COLBY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
1255 SOUTH RANGE
COLBY, KS
913 462-3984
Kurt Backstrom - Fitness Lab Director, PTA Program Instructor
Suzanne Backstrom - PTA Program Instructor
Joyce Hansen, Chair, Health and Physical Education

INTRODUCTION

The Colby Community College (CCC) Fitness Lab affords the twenty-five students of the college's Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program a dynamic learning laboratory in which to practice their classroom-acquired skills. This unique instructional program provides first-hand experiences for the PTA students in the areas of testing, intervention measures, and health maintenance techniques. In addition, the CCC Fitness Lab provides systematic fitness exercise utilizing dynamic variable resistance equipment for over 300 students and area community residents.

PHILOSOPHY

In keeping with a campus-wide commitment to excellence in developing the whole student, the CCC Fitness Lab aims to provide opportunities for personal lifestyle programming through individualized evaluation, continuous assessment, diversified instruction, and outcomes measures. PTA students utilize the lab as a hands-on learning laboratory. The major tenet of the total program's design is wellness. Contrary to physical fitness measures which focus exclusively upon crisis situations, the Fitness measures which focus on preventative measures. The program attempts to circumvent human ailment and promore physical, emotional, social, and intellectual well-being. A schematic of how the CCC Fitness Lab personnel perceive wholistic wellness is illustrated at the end of this document, on page 13.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

As an integral part of the total PTA program at CCC, the Fitness Lab most obviously affects the PTA students personally and educationally. These students reflect the population of the entire campus. The average age on campus is twenty-four years; and sixty percent of the student body is female. Numerous other community college students and Colby residents also utilize the Fitness Lab. Over 300 persons ranging in age from eighteen to seventy years normally enroll per semester, in addition to the PTA enrollees.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Various groups and individuals were polled in order to test the feasibility of the fitness Lab concept prior to its installation. A CCC student survey indicated strong support for such a facilty on campus. Faculty members and administrators were contacted personally by the Physical Therapy staff in order to guage their interest in the project. The fact that a fitness center had recently closed in the community, although citizen interest in it was relatively keen, suggested that a population outside of the college itself might also back such a physical fitness lab.

A professional consultant, responsible for a highly successful program similar to the one suggested by the PTA instructors at CCC, provided valuable information prior to implementation regarding appropriate exercise systems, space considerations, operating procedures, and staffing considerations.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The specific goals of the Fitness Lab as they relate to the mission of Colby Community College, its philosophy of student health, and its interest in individualized intervention and wholistic development, are as follows:

*To train PTA students in methods of testing, monitoring, and instructing in Fitness Lab enviroments.

*To provide hands-on applications for PTA students.

*To train PTA students in intervention methodology.

*To provide better futures for the citizens of northwest Kansas.

*To inspire healthful lifestyles for the lab's participants.

*To enable participants to be conscientious consumers of wellness processes and products.

*To focus programming on prevention measures.

*To treat every participants' awareness of the complexity and needs of the human body.

*To show concern for the safety of each participant.

*To assess individual medical statuses in order to prescribe proper actions. Assessment includes:

Resting heart rate

Blood pressure

Girth measurements

Body fat measurements

Cardiovascular endurance

Flexibility

Muscular endurance

Dynamic strength

*Compare pretest and posttest measures in order to measure participants' achievement.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Periodic meetings of those responsible for the Fitness Lab, including its director, assistant director, departmental chairperson, and staff, insure that the program is meeting its goals. The goals and the standard operating procedures were thoroughly decided upon by all these individuals prior to the opening of the lab. Formative evaluation which concentrates upon the program's effectiveness are on-going and both formal and informal.

Responses from the participants in the form of participant surveys are utilized to measure client satisfaction and make appropriate modifications.

ADAPTION/ADOPTION PROCEDURES

In order to adapt such a program into another educational enviroment, CCC's Fitness Lab managers recommend the following:

1. Assess community and institutional needs.
2. Seek professional assistance to avoid "reinventing the wheel."
3. Utilize in-house expertise in designing lab space and in devising standard operating procedures for its utilization.
4. Take time to carefully plan operating procedures and to anticipate challenges which might arise.
5. Select "user friendly" equipment.
6. "Shop around" for equipment which fits the available space meets budgetary guidelines.

Fitness labs such as the one at CCC are normally self-supportive and can even be money-making operations within a relatively short period of time. Creative methods for raising starting capital as

suggested by the lab's staff at CCC include:

1. Borrowing money from the Student Senate.

2. Offering a fitness/wellness program to businesses or city departments at flat rates for a given period of time. A major benefit to the organizations may be reductions in their insurance costs.

3. Selling bonds.

4. Obtaining a bank loan.

5. Increasing student fees.

6. Writing for grant support.

7. Borrowing from facility's upkeep budget temporarily.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

A variety of methods, materials, and technologies have been designed to achieve the Fitness Lab's goals. These methods include personalized attention, continuous supervision, repetition, mechanical instruction, written material, computerized printouts, and assessment systems. Specific teaching and learning strategies used by the Fitness Lab personnel include:

*Personalized attention to each participant.

*Hands-on applications with the equipment.

*Demonstrations of proper warm-up exercising and equipment utilization.

*Self-directed learning through the use of (a) strategically posted instructional materials, (b) continuous audio-visual instruction, and (c) personal monitoring by participants of their own pulse rates and flexibility.

*Constant supervision of participants.

*Introduction to the program through a one-hour, required orientation session.

*Thorough written instructions provided to the participants in a participants' manual.

Most of the instuctional materials for the lab, with the exception of proper equipment usage diagrams which are adhered to the equipment itself, were created or adapted by the Fitness Lab staff or by other CCC personnel. Audio-cassette instructions provide on-going reminders notifying participants when they should proceed to other

pieces of equipment. Background music provides pleasing rhythms with which the participants can pace their activities.

Constant supervision and assistance by the lab's staff insure participants that medical and enviromental safety is a paramount concern of the program's operators.

PROCEDURES

The procedures that participants follow in their initial enrollment in the Fitness Lab are:

1. Enroll in Fitness Lab at the college.
2. Schedule a suitable time with the Fitness Lab personnel for pretesting and orientation sessions.
3. Obtain a medical clearance from one's physician.
4. Take the pretest battery.
5. Attend the mandatory orientation session to receive individual test results (computer print out) and precription for activities, learn safety procedures, receive a participants' manual, and obtain a workout pass which monitors attendance and lists one's work out schedule.
6. Participate in the tri-weekly supervised/monitored sessions throughout the semester.
7. Take the posttest battery.
8. Receive individual test results, comparisons and improvements, and obtain a new workout prescription.
9. Utilize posttest results as a replacement for pretesting the following semester.

Upon completion of the first semester, Fitness Lab participants can enroll in a continuation of the program called "Supercircuit."

DOCUMENTATION

Each participant's pretest and posttest results for the semester are printed via and inhouse-developed computer software program, in order to allow the participants and the lab's personnel to quantify individual and collective results. To date, results of approximately six hundred participants' assessments have been stored. It is the hope of the program's director that longitudinal analysis of this data in the near future will reveal trends and correlations which will provide direction for program's revision.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT
LOCAL INVOLVEMENT

Top level administrative support was vital to the development and success of the Fitness Lab program at CCC. The president's personal philosophy of wellness as a way of life generated enthusiasm from other sectors of the community and the college. The dean of instruction was also a positive advocate for the program from its outset. He wrote the grant to finance the purchase of equipment for the program, assisted in acquiring the remainder of the necessary funding from the college's budget, and solicited local businesses for lab furnishings. The chairperson of the Health and Physical Education Department at the college was also very helpful in finding ways to integrate the Fitness Lab into her department's curriculum. The co-instructor of the PTA program, along with the lab's director, assisted with procedures for infusing the PTA curriculum with fitness/wellness training directly related to Fitness Lab experiences.

SOURCES OF CONTINUING REVENUE

The Fitness Lab program is offered as a one-hour credit course. Cost for the course is $25 plus a lab fee of $10. Grades for the Fitness Lab are assigned according to attendance. Participation three times each week during the semester constitutes a passing grade. During the last year, approximately 750 persons enrolled in the course including the PTA students. Start-up monies for the program at CCC amounted to approximately $30,000. The lab was partially funded with a grant for vocational programming; as the program greatly enhanced the capability of training the PTA students at the institution. Additional funding came from the college's facility improvement budget.

STAFFING AND COURSE MATERIALS

The director of the CCC Fitness Lab took a course offered by the manufacturers of the lab's resistance equipment prior to opening the facility. This course trained the director in the proper utilization of the equipment and safety precautions as well as in methods of testing, components of fitness, stress management, and proper nutrition. Upon the director's return from the manufacturer's course, he presented a two-day course on equipment operation and test, etc., to the other staff members. The Fitness Lab director is a Registered Physical Therapist, and holds a Masters Degree in Physical Education. The first staffers of the lab were chosen from the instructional and support personnel on campus. The staff received cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification from an in-house instructor qualified to award such certification. They were especially selected for their backgrounds in nursing, physical fitness, or biological science.

One other staffer besides the program's director has since

received certification through the equipment company's program. During the second year of the lab's operation, a full-time employee was hired to oversee activities there. This person's background included graduation from the PTA program at CCC. Also, a Registered Nurse was hired part-time to assist with the lab's operation. Arrangements are underway to have both of these persons attend the equipment manufacturer's course in the near future.

Constantly assisting with the operation of the Fitness Lab and testing are the sophomore PTA students. Each is given the opportunity of working in the lab to enhance their PTA training. They are required, as part of their coursework, to work out in the Fitness Lab three times per week. Two of these times are accomplished during class sessions with their instructors. Before being allowed to work independently in the lab, the sophomore and freshmen PTA students help record preliminary test scores and practice testing each other. During the spring semester of their sophomore year, the students gain sufficient competencies to become primary testers with supervision. Tests the students learn to administer include those mentioned on page 3 of this document under Goals and Objectives. The PTA students are also certified to perform CPR. An additional requirement for the students is currently being designed by their instructors. The requirement for the students is currently being designed by their instructors. The requirement will take the form of a practical examination, to be administered for the first time in January of 1988. It will entail the identification of major muscle groups exercised by each piece of equipment, the computation of target work zones for Fitness Lab participants, the demonstration of correct equipment usage, and explanation of warm-up and cool-down exercises.

Practical Nurse Education students normally assist the lab's staff with posttesting. A computer specialist on staff at CCC is hired to enter the participants' test results at the beginning of each semester.

Written program materials include a procedures manual, designed by the director and his co-PTA instructor, which is issued to each staff member to maintain quality control in the management of the lab. Participants also receive a manual which describes fitness/wellness rationale and outlines Fitness Lab procedures. Pamphlets prepared by the health-related organizations are offered in the Fitness Lab site free of charge.

PROGRAM INTEGRATION

The college Fitness Lab is available as a Lifestyle course to all students of the college for graduation credit. In this case, the course includes nutritional diet planning and stress management techniques in addition to the physical fitness component. Computor software makes it possible for students enrolled for credit to analyze their eating habits, identify stressors, and propose personal intervention plans; once again emphasizing wholistic self-development. Supercircuit is also available as a physical activity for students who

have completed Fitness Lab.

Art students originally assisted in painting the graphic wall design in the Fitness Lab. Currently one-third of the faculty and staff are personal participants in Fitness Lab program. Training for all college's athletes is also available at the lab.

The involvment of nursing students in testing procedures, other college personnal who helped with production of audio-visual materials, inputting of participant data, and assisting with fitness lab operations, and community residents (as mentioned previously) make this program a truly integrated one.

FUTURE PLANS

Plans for the future which will expand the integration of the fitness program at Colby Community College will be the establishment of a "Wellness Committee." According to the lab's director, one of the main purposes of this committee "will be to coordinate the wellness activities that are already occurring on the campus. In this way, we can help market and support each other's efforts." He perceives the elemental essentials of wellness as being nutrition and fitness, self-responsibility and medical self-care, ethics, values and purposes, stress management, and boredom immunity. These essentials, when practiced by the majority, can create changes in norms and rules, making them receptive to wellness concerns (see page 13).

Signatures:

_____ _____

Dr. Mikel Ary, President — Date
Colby Community College

_____ _____

Mr. Kurt Backstrom, PTA Instructor — Date
and Fitness Lab Director

_____ _____

Joyce Hansen, Chairperson — Date
Health and Physical Education Dept.

Suzanne Backstrom, PTA Instructor Date

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